

[Description of a Pioneer's Experience]

Interview

Jordan, Mrs. Mildred

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DESCRIPTION OF A PIONEERS EXPERIENCE

WAGON TRAIN DAYS OF TRAVEL.

Some hair - raising stories of experience with the Indians as told by Mr. William H. Eisele in his travels by wagon train, when Indians were plentiful and the train with Eisele was connected had many thrilling encounters with them, but no serious trouble. Perhaps the most exciting one when they reached the Arkansas River and were preparing to ford it. Some fierce looking red skins in breech clouts and war paint rode up and watched the proceedings with interest and when the team Eisele was managing balked in midstream and refused to budge, the Indians charged into the water with blood stirring yells, apparently, bent on taking advantage of the situation. To the surprise and relief of the wagon men, however, they proved to be interested only in getting the refractory oxen in motion and they did this with the use of English oaths, probably the only English words they knew.

Shortly after his return from Las Vegas, Mr. Eisele joined another wagon train bound for Virginia City, Mont., over the Oregon trail. This time he drove mules, which were more to his liking as he could ride one. He returned to Westport in '65 by way of Salt Lake City,

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and Denver. In the Utah city he saw Brigham Young and at Denver he joined a record breaking wagon team train. [???

Men from all over the Western country had assembled there for protection from the Indians on the way [East?]. They had 445 2 wagons in going out of Denver, a [?] more than four miles long. There was an average of four to six men to the wagon.

He went to Paola, Kansas in 1857 and to Los Angeles, Calif., in 1873 when the city had a population of 3,000. From there he freighted to the [?] mines of Nevada in '73 and in 1874 went to Trinidad, Colo., where he operated a bakery fourteen years. Later living in Kansas City, Kan., in Missouri, and in Siloam Springs, Ark. He lived as Fort Bayard thirteen years, now living in Silver City.

In all the nine states in which Mr. Eisele lived - is at his best when recalling the [?] of the frontier and steamboat landing on the Missouri that was to develop into Kansas City.

Many a night he heard the wolf and the wildcat holler at Westport in the early days. Many times he has seen the old Concord coaches go thro'ugh there from Independence bound for Santa Fe, loaded with passengers. It took seven days to go to Santa Fe, one way.

He remembers the somewhat famous incident of Milto McGee's ride behind an ox hitched to a buggy, when Mr. McGee was serving as the second mayor of Kansas City. McGee was a lover of horses and owner of several fast ones and he was both angered and humiliated at being arrested for fast driving while serving as the City's chief executive, perhaps one of the first cases of an arrest for speeding in the city's history. In derision he hitched the ox into his buggy and hired a negro boy 3 to lead it thro'ugh the streets while he sat solemnly holding the reins.

Another event Mr. Eisele recounts in the burial, in 1859 or 1860 of [Coshanka?], a [Kaw?] Indian Chief. The Indian was buried on the prairie near Independence with his dog, horse and gun in the same grave, according to the Indian custom. Horse and dog were

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slaughtered just before the burial. He gives an account of a man who had been scalped by the Indians at Westport. He did not see it done, but saw the man when he was brought in for treatment. The Indian had cut around the scalp, placed his foot on the head and jerked off the scalp, leaving him for dead. He did not remember if the man fully recovered.

With all his exciting traveling from place to place, Mr. Eisele was a family man, who found time to rear four children. Except for the loss of his wife several years ago, after a happy married life of 47 years, he has never had a death in his immediate family.

Source of Information

Mr. William H. Eisele, Silver City, New Mexico.

4

Field Notes. NOTES OF PIONEERING TRAVELS William H. Eisele - Joined wagon train for the west - year 1862. Experiences - Many with the Indians; Joined wagon train again later - returning from Las Vegas, N. M. - joined another wagon train for Virginia City, Mont., took Oregon trail.

Drove mules - returned to Westport, Kan., in 1865, saw Brigham Young in Utah City 445 wagons - gathered at Denver for protection from Indians - formed a train more than four miles long - 4 to 6 men to a wagon.

Going to Paola, Kan., 1857 - Los Angeles Calif., 1873 - freighted to borax mines of Nevada, 1873 - in 1874 to Trinidad Colo., operated a bakery here 14 years.

Later lived in Kansas City, Kan., Missouri - Siloam Springs, Ark., - Fort Bayard, N. Mex., for 30 years - now in Silver City, N. M.

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Saw old Concord coaches. Remembers - Milton McGee's ride - 2nd mayor of Kansas City - arrest for speeding. Burial - of [coshunka?], - [Kaw?] Indian Chief in 1859 or 1860 - with horse, gun, dog.

Saw man who was scalped by Indians at Westport.

Mr. Eisele had family - 4 children.